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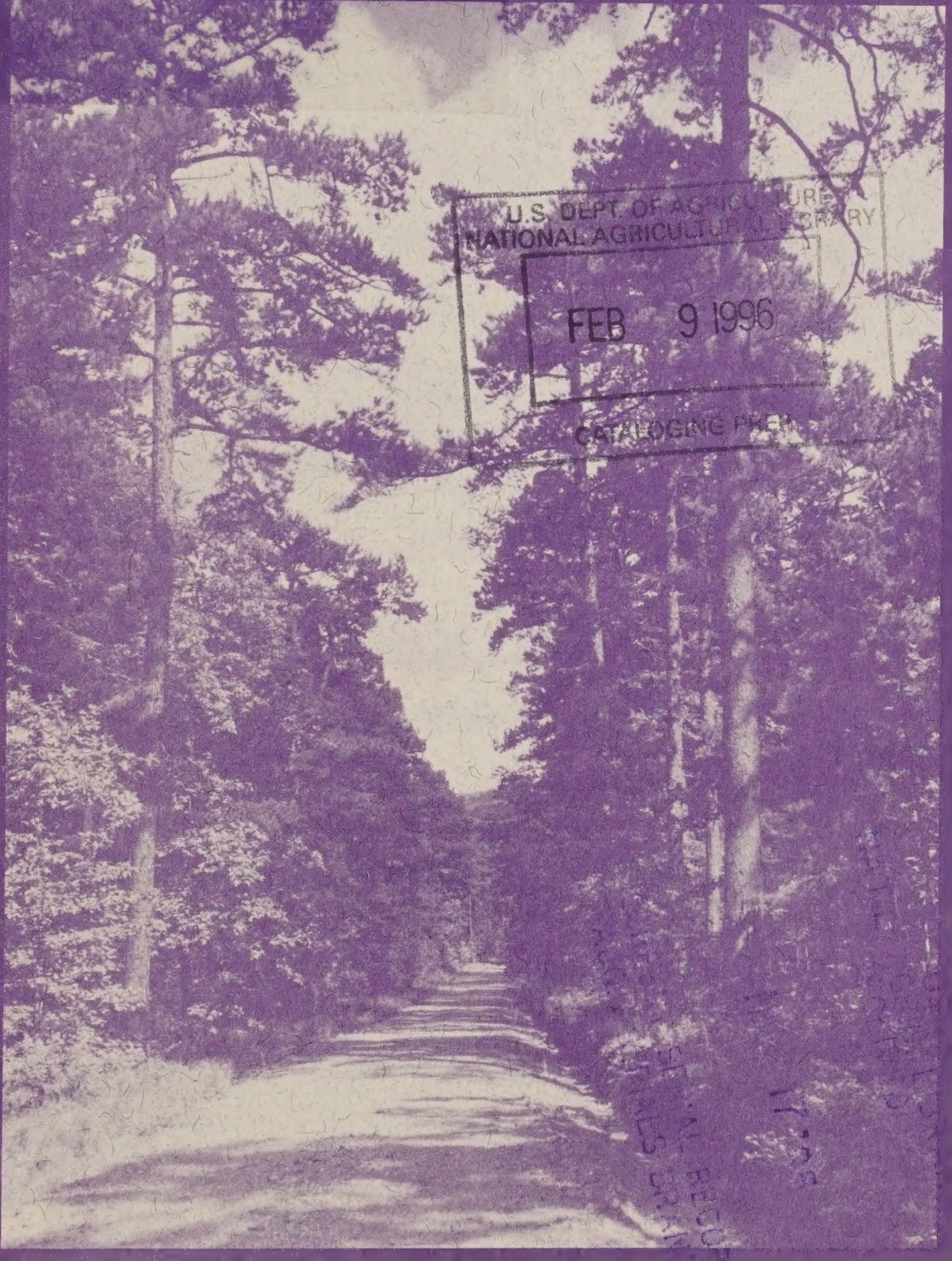
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Buffalo Gap

Auto Tour

Ouachita National Forest



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WELCOME to the Buffalo Gap Auto Tour. Experience the beauty of the Ouachita National Forest and discover the history, legends and folklore that encompass the area. History gives us the documented facts on how people lived in the past. The legends and folklore, coming from generations of tale telling, gives a glimpse into attitudes and belief systems. Each provides valuable insight into the lives of those who traveled these roads before us. Join us in traveling these well-worn roads.

The 15 mile tour will take about 2 hours to drive. The route is marked at all intersections. It starts on Scenic 7 Byway at the Jessieville Ranger Station, 19 miles north of Hot Springs. Follow it for 6 miles north to Forest Road 11. For the next 9 miles the route switches from a paved highway to a gravel road suitable for cars. Although the road is designed for two-way traffic, use caution on the curves and keep an eye open for trucks and other vehicles. Mountain bicyclists will be sharing the road with you throughout the rest of the tour.



Jessieville Ranger and Information Station

(19 miles north of Hot Springs on Scenic 7 Byway)

Stop in and say hello. The front office serves as a visitor information center and the staff will gladly answer your questions. See their extensive supply of brochures on recreation opportunities in the area as well as the Hot Springs area. Nature study guides and other educational materials can also be purchased here. Be sure to visit the Friendship Trail located behind the office. This short, 30-minute walk meanders through a mature pine and hardwood forest. The trail is paved and features a pond, picnic area, pavilion, interpretive signs, and restroom.



Iron Springs Recreation Area

(4 miles from Jessieville Visitor Information Station, on Scenic 7 Byway.)

This is a great place to take a hike, wade in a stream or enjoy your lunch. The roadside camp offers 6 camping sites, drinking water, picnic shelters, a wading area and restroom. This facility is fully accessible and Hunt's Loop Trail begins just beyond the picturesque bridge.

Along this 4-mile trail, you can enjoy a panoramic view from Short Mountain Vista and observe interesting geologic features on the steep, rocky slope above Iron Springs. For many years the water of Iron Springs was thought to have special healing powers. People from far away were drawn here.

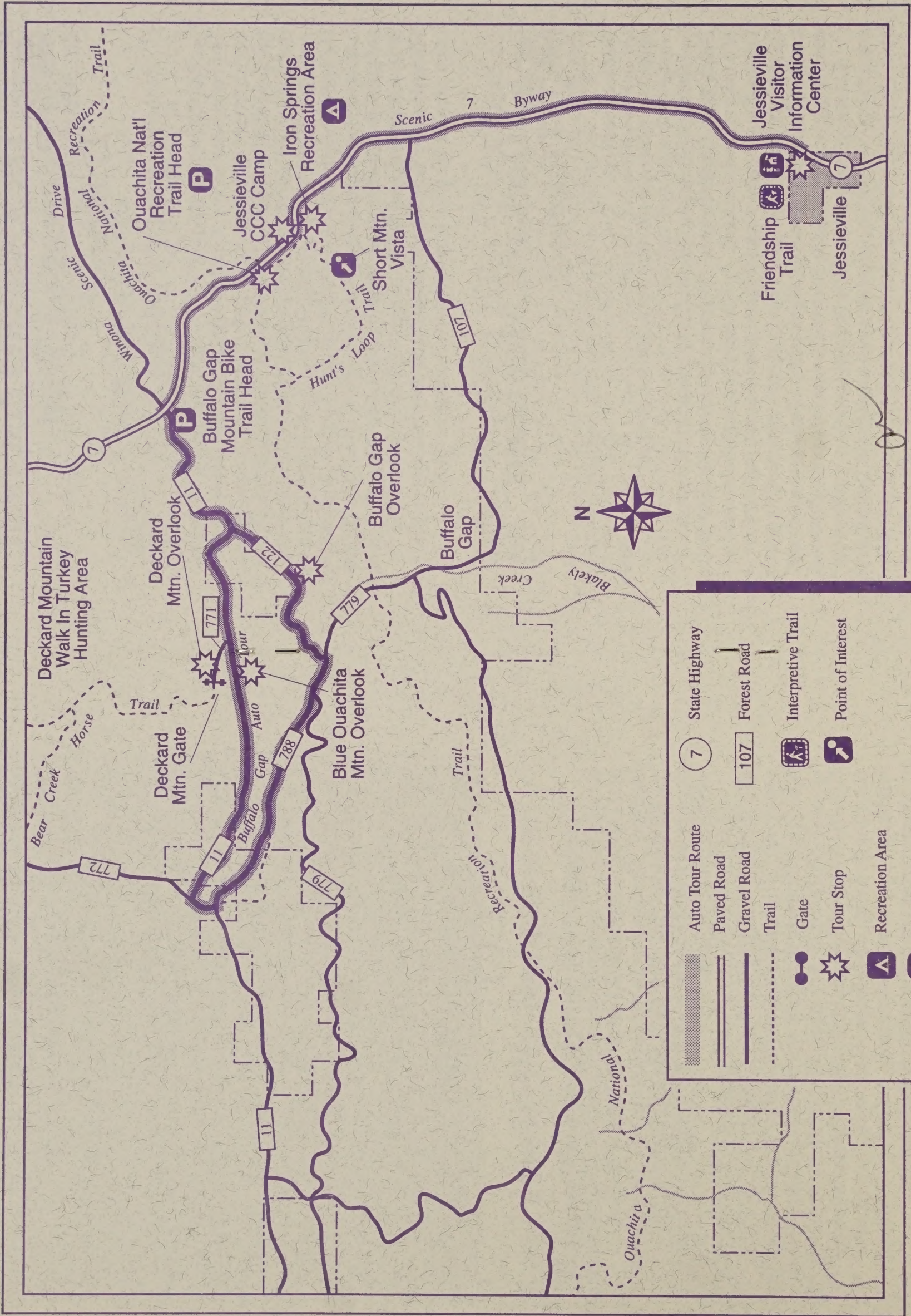


Jessieville Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC)

(0.4 miles north of Iron Springs, on Scenic 7 Byway.)

You are standing on the site of the first CCC camp in this area. Scenic 7 Byway runs through what used to be the center of this camp. The barracks sat on the hillside across the highway. The concrete footing in front of you is what is left of the gas station. This camp provided a springboard out of poverty for these young men while providing the nation with a wealth of public facilities.

The CCC was a Federal work program in the early 1930's and 1940's. During these desperate times, the Corps gave young men in their teens and early twenties more than their first job. Many received their first pair of shoes at camp. Every month \$20 of the \$25 they made, was sent home to their needy families. These young men built many of the roads you are traveling on today. They fought fires to save the beautiful landscapes surrounding these roads and constructed many of the recreation areas you enjoy today on public lands.



Buffalo Gap Auto Tour



The Ouachita National Recreation Trail Trailhead

(1.1 miles north of Jessieville CCC Camp, on Highway .)

Not long ago, what is now the Ouachita National Recreation Trail was just a series of rough, unmarked paths. Many of these were traveled by Native Americans, Spanish explorers, French trappers and early settlers. Work started on the modern trail in the early 1970's, by the Forest Service and a group called the Arkansas Green Thumb. Today, this trail spans 192 miles across the entire length of the Ouachita National Forest and opens up to hikers the spectacular beauty of the Ouachita Mountains. There are numerous trailhead access points along the way and, together with volunteer organizations such as the Ouachita Mountain Hikers and the Boy Scouts of America, the Forest Service is committed to this trail's maintenance and improvement.



Deckard Mountain Overlook

(From the trailhead of the Ouachita National Recreation Trailhead on Scenic 7 Byway, travel north for 0.6 miles. Turn west or left onto Forest Road 11. Travel on Forest Road 11 for 2 miles to Forest Road 771. Turn right onto 771 and follow it to the end).

Deckard Mountain is the highest point north of the road. Black bears live in the area which was the favorite hunting ground of a man named Deckard. As the story goes, one day when Deckard was out hunting for his next meal he ran into a rather large black bear. This bear decided to make Deckard his next meal. When the dust settled, Deckard and the bear were found dead lying side by side, the bear with a knife wound to the heart.

Look northeast at one of the many outstanding vistas on the forest. To your left, on a clear day you may see the flat-top Petit Jean Mountain, which was carved by the Arkansas River. At dead center is the most striking landscape feature, the dome-shaped Forked Mountain. Obscured from view at the lowest

point is Scenic 7 Byway, which runs beside Trace Creek. As you look out over the vast forest and mountainous terrain, it is easy to see why this road was located where it is. Imagine traveling through this terrain in a wagon or on horseback!



Blue Ouachita Mountain Overlook

(Back on forest Road 11, travel 0.2 miles to Blue Ouachita Mountain Overlook.)

Through the opening in the forest, lies Blue Ouachita Mountain, which is the large ridgeline running east to west. Located on the far right is Ouachita Pinnacle crowned with communication towers. During the CCC era a fire tower stood on top of Ouachita Pinnacle. The men of the CCC tell of the times they were stationed there for weeks on end. When a fire occurred, the lookout would telephone the main camp so crews could be dispatched to fight the blaze with shovels and picks.



Buffalo Gap Overlook

(Continue west on Forest Road 11 to the junction of Forest Road 788. Turn left onto Forest Road 788 and travel to Forest Road 122. Turn left on Forest Road 122 and travel to the overlook. Buffalo Gap Overlook is 3.7 miles from Ouachita Pinnacle Overlook.)

This stop reveals a clear view of the mountain pass known as Buffalo Gap. During the winter when the leaves have fallen you can see Big Blakely Creek, which runs along Forest Road 779. This historic route was used by Native Americans, explorers, soldiers and settlers.

Buffalo Gap received its name from the days when Native Americans inhabited this area. Legend tells us they chased the bison into the gap and then attacked them from both sides.

There is also a rumor that when Spanish soldiers traveled through this area they were attacked by a band of Native Americans. During one attack the Spaniards buried their gold in Big Blakely Creek. Although there has been no evidence to validate this story, like many legends it has been passed down through generations for its entertainment value.



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(To return to Scenic 7 Byway, continue on this road back to Forest Road 11 and turn right to return to Scenic 7 Byway.)

The Ouachita National Forest is an extraordinary place to visit, and this drive highlights just a few of its many treasures. You have experienced the rolling beauty of the forested mountains, discovered folklore behind Deckard Mountain and Buffalo Gap and learned some of the history of the area. All of this has been brought to you through the combined efforts of the USDA Forest Service and the support of volunteers and partnerships. If you would like to become more involved and learn more about your National Forests, please feel free to contact us on the Ouachita National Forest or at any of the field offices scattered throughout the forest. Remember...this is your land!

For more information or comments please contact:

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